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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Electronic Media Services

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2647

January 28, 1994

EXPORTS IN 1994 -- A boost in exports to developing countries kept the U.S. export rate from declining in 1993 as compared to year earlier levels. An expected modest recovery by our trading partners will likely raise U.S. exports enough to prevent the trade deficit from increasing as sharply as it did in 1993. Given the dollar's value, many American manufactured goods are competitively priced relative to foreign goods of comparable quality. The increase in exports will likely mitigate the expected rise in imports which comes with an enlargement in U.S. income. **Contact: David Torgerson (202) 219-0782.**

WATER QUALITY -- A new tool is now available to help farm managers, advisors and scientists select the best practices for keeping farm pesticides and fertilizers out of water supplies. The computer program, developed by USDA researchers, is designed to help determine the amount of dissolved agrichemicals that will be transported to ground and surface water supplies under specific farming methods. The Opus computer program comes with documentation manuals. It requires an IBM-compatible computer and runs best on a 386 or faster microprocessor. **Contact: Roger Smith (303) 491-8263.**

NEW USES -- USDA researchers have found that mixtures of cornstarch and natural gums have many of the properties required for fat substitutes and food thickeners. The Agricultural Research Service is exploring commercial development of food additives made from cornstarch and naturally occurring gums obtained from plants. Natural gums are already being used as thickeners in food products such as puddings, pie fillings and salad dressings. A mixture of 95 percent cornstarch and gum will be tested as a thickener in dairy products. **Contact: George Fanta (309) 685-4011.**

LOAN RATES -- USDA is reducing interest rates on disaster loans from 4.5 percent to 3.75 percent, and changing eligibility requirements for emergency loans from Farmers Home Administration. Eligibility calculations will no longer include payments from crop insurance and ASCS. Farmers must show a 30 percent loss from normal production. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy says reducing interest rates and easing eligibility requirements will assist borrowers in meeting their financial obligations, and benefit the entire rural economy by helping maintain financial stability of the family farm. **Contact: Joe O'Neill (202) 720-6903.**

NEW APPOINTMENT -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy has named Karl Stauber as deputy under secretary of agriculture for small community and rural development. Stauber will help in policy and budget development for USDA's Farmers Home Administration, Rural Development Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and the Agricultural Cooperative Service. Stauber has a Ph.D. in public policy, and served as vice president of a private foundation working to increase the economic vitality of low-income communities. **Contact: Jim Brownlee (202) 720-2091.**

HOG OUTLOOK -- Barrow and gilt prices are expected to average slightly higher this year, but higher costs, especially for feed, will reduce producers' net returns. Feed costs are expected to remain high until the 1994 crops are harvested. Prices for feed will be very sensitive to crop prospects during the year. Hog prices are expected to recover from the low \$40's per cwt this winter and move into the low \$50's during spring and summer, retreating to the mid \$40's per cwt this fall. Total pork exports will remain weak, about 3 percent below 1993 levels. Retail pork prices will average 1-3 percent above last year's \$1.98 per pound. **Contact: Leland Southard (202) 219-0767.**

SUNFLOWERS -- U.S. production of sunflowers in 1993 totaled 2.6 billion pounds, down slightly from 1992. Average yield was 1,037 pounds per acre, down 220 pounds from 1992. Harvested area was 2.5 million acres, up from 2 million a year ago. **Contact: Mark Ash (202) 219-0840.**

HAY -- Production of all hay in 1993 is estimated at 149 million tons, down slightly from 1992. Growers harvested 60 million acres. Average yield was 2.4 tons per acre, nearly the same as in 1992. **Contact: Herb Eldridge (202) 720-7621.**

FALL POTATOES -- Despite flood losses in the upper Midwest the fall potato crop was the second largest on record, 377 million cwt, down 1 percent from 1992. The yield averaged 333 cwt per acre, about the same as year ago levels. Colorado and Washington produced record highs in acreage and production. **Contact: Arvin Budge (202) 720-4285.**

IMPORTS FROM GERMANY -- USDA has proposed to allow import from Germany of fresh, chilled and frozen meats and dairy products from ruminant animals. The action comes from a USDA proposal to declare Germany free of foot-and-mouth disease and rinderpest, two communicable and destructive diseases of livestock. There is limited demand in the United States for import of German meat and dairy products, and the USDA proposal is not expected to have a major impact on current trade patterns. **Contact: Kendra Pratt (301) 436-4898.**

AGRICULTURE IN THE CITY -- Farm and farm-related industries account for 23 million jobs, about 17 percent, of total U.S. employment. Nearly 71 percent of all farm and farm-related jobs are located in metro counties. Agricultural wholesale and retail trade account for two-thirds of these jobs, about 15 percent of total metro employment, and is the fastest growing segment of agricultural employment. The jobs are located in metro areas because employment in wholesale and retail trade depends on the size and growth of consumer markets. **Contact: Thomas Rowley (202) 219-0546.**

MAPLE SYRUP -- A favorite food on cold mornings is maple syrup and pancakes. Syrup prices increased in 1993, reflecting tight supplies. Maple syrup production last year totaled one million gallons, down 39 percent from 1992 totals. Northeastern producers had one of their worst years due to deep snow, unfavorable temperatures for syrup production, and a spring blizzard. Producers are looking forward to the 1994 season. **Contact: Annette Clausen (202) 219-0880.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1912 -- Brenda Curtis talks with Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy about his first year in office. (Weekly 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1394 -- Improving meat inspections; the hazards of heat tape; working with your financial planner; broccoli or cauliflower; keepers of the past. (Weekly 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1904 -- U.S. pork to Russia; USDA's reorganization plan on schedule; GATT and the EEP; a varying farm financial picture; lower interest rates on disaster loans. (Weekly features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1657 -- Cows protect sheep; grazing in harmony; "far-ranging" research; apple expedition; apples in peril. (Weekly research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tuesday, February 8, weekly weather and crop situation; Thursday, February 10, world ag supply and demand, crop production; Friday, February, February 11, world ag and grain production, world oilseed situation, world cotton situation, cattle and sheep outlook; Monday, February 14, feed update, oil crops update; Tuesday, February 15, weekly weather and crop, farm labor, ag income and finance. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359

COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on the Extension Service "Master Gardener" program. Will Pemble looks at shock treatment to improve plants.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA meteorologist Bob Stefanski on the weather and crop situation. USDA world board chairman James Donald on supply and demand estimates.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- DeBoria Janifer reports on the livestock and poultry outlook. Pat O'Leary reports on precision farming.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT; Saturdays 10:00 a.m., EDT; Mondays 8:00 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

SEVERE COLD WEATHER...is often harder on producers than their livestock, says **Colleen Callahan** (WMBD, Peoria, IL). She interviewed Extension personnel who noted that while many animals can withstand the cold, owners must provide water, extra bedding and feed. Colleen told her audience that in extreme cold conditions animals need three times the energy in their feed to maintain body heat, requiring addition of concentrates to regular feed. She will be covering the Illinois Pork Conference, February 1, in Peoria.

PROJECT DAIRY 2020...is an industry initiative in Wisconsin designed to keep the state's producers profitable into the 21st Century, says **Michael Austin** (WGEE/WDEZ, Green Bay, WI). Mike is covering developments for his listeners, including a legislative initiative for property tax relief. With wind chill temperatures to -77 degrees, Mike says dairy producers have been busy keeping pipes from freezing and maintaining sufficient feed supplies. Tight supply has forced some producers to send cows to slaughter. Mike's station is sponsoring for the 4th year the Farm Show, scheduled February 20 in Green Bay. A larger exhibit area will be available this year.

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THE WORST WEEK OF COLD WEATHER...since 1957, says **Al Carstens** (KATE, Albert Lea, MN). Mid-January provided consistent -25 to -30 temperatures, with wind chill to -80 degrees. Al says producers plug in their electric heat tapes to keep water flowing to livestock. The forecast calls for 20 above. Al says that's definitely short sleeves and Bermudas weather.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Cary Martin** (KVOO, Tulsa, OK). He received the Media Recognition Award from the Oklahoma Farm Bureau at its 52nd annual convention for best describing the importance of agriculture to the farm and nonfarm public.

TWO USDA RADIO STAFFERS...participating in the Department's Management Development Program will be absent from our services for the next six weeks. **Brenda Curtis** will be working on radio services with **Jim Davis**, press secretary at the House Agriculture Committee. **Maria Bynum** will help **Dean Plowman**, acting assistant secretary for Science and Education, to plan and execute public information programs. **Lori Spiczka** will temporarily transfer to the radio staff.

VIC POWELL 
Office of Communications